

PASOC 20



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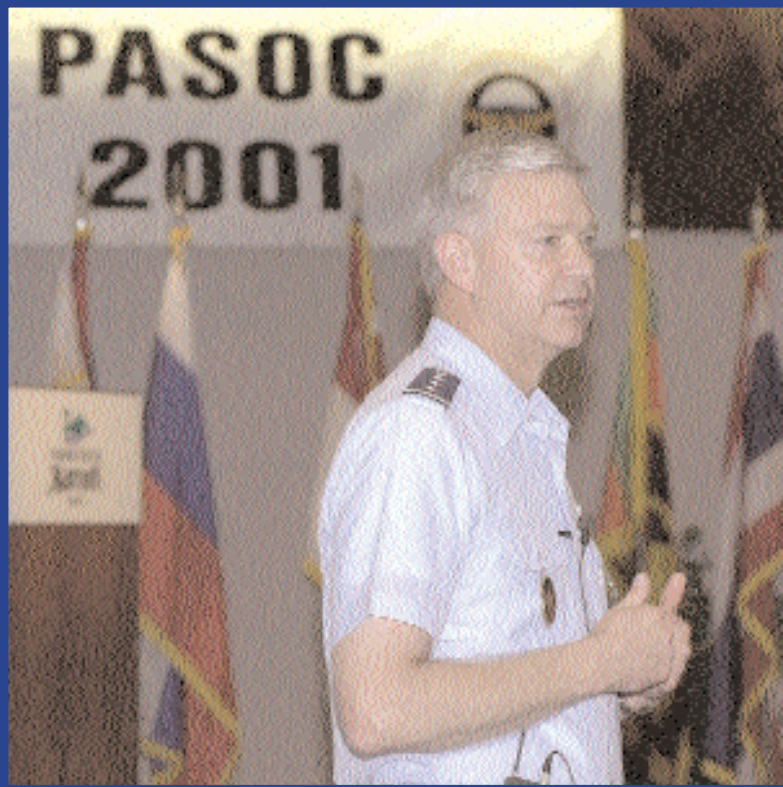
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Special Operations Forces in an Emerging Threat Environment



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The Commander in Chief, U.S. Special Operations Command, Gen. Charles R. Holland, addresses PASOC 2001.

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Lt. Col. Derek Koh is one of five PASOC attendees from Singapore.



Lt. Col. Frank Miller, U.S. Defense Attaché, Hanoi, and 1st Lt. Binh Nhu Xuan and Sr. Col. Hung Pham Ngoc of Vietnam, listen to a conference speaker.

PASOC 2001

Future thinking and capabilities of Asia-Pacific Special Operations Forces were explored at the Pacific Area Special Operations Conference 2001 (PASOC) held in Honolulu, Hawaii, in February 2001. Special Operations Command, Pacific (SOCPAC), a sub-unified command under the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command (USCINCPAC), located at Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii, hosted PASOC 2001.

PASOC is one of USCINCPAC's major events where commanders of Asia-Pacific Special Operations units come together to exchange ideas and build friendships with their counterparts. PASOC 2001 was the ninth in the series that began in 1992.

Almost 200 delegates from 24 nations participated in this year's conference, which included officers and civilian officials from Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Japan, Korea, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mongolia,

Nepal, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, the United States, Vanuatu, and Vietnam.

"The Future of Special Operations Forces in an Emerging Threat Environment" was a timely theme, said Adm. Dennis C. Blair, USCINCPAC, in a keynote address. He pointed out that the most common threats the Asia-Pacific region faces in this emerging threat environment can be collectively catego-

rized into two types, and that both threats were more likely to require the unique talents and training of Special Operations personnel.

These threats are communal violence and transnational concerns. Communal violence is driven by separatists' movements and historical grievances, while transnational concerns include terrorism, weapons proliferation, illegal drug trafficking, piracy, and criminal organizations that do not respect law or international



Brig. Jayantha Ranaweera of Sri Lanka presents his country's briefing to PASOC attendees.

borders. Adm. Blair observed, "Working together to counter transnational threats and communal violence in the region is a worthy goal for all of us."

He pointed out that, to effectively combat these threats, Special Operations Forces need to join together as a cohesive unit. To achieve this cohesion, regional forces need to come together during peacetime and prepare for operations by participating in multinational exercises and conferences.

Adm. Blair gave several examples of close cooperation between regional Special Operations Forces that have been successful, or hold promise of success soon. "Last year, there was a marvelous example of Special Operation Forces cooperation with the Sydney Olympics," said Adm. Blair. "For the Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia, special

operators from many different countries came together, integrated with law enforcement authorities, in case terrorists would try to do again what they did in Munich in 1972." He noted that special legislation in Australia authorized the use of force in case of terrorist attack. "This is the right way to do it," he said.

Adm. Blair also pointed to the close working relationship between U.S. Special Operations Forces and their Thai counterparts in countering international narcotics smugglers in Thailand, and with their Philippine counterparts to help establish a military counterterrorist unit to deal with terrorist threats from organizations such as the Abu Sayyaf Group.

"Increasingly, the threats to our national security come not from neighboring armed forces," said Adm. Blair, "but from terrorists and international criminals that take advantage of the primitive mechanisms that we have for cooperation among our law enforcement forces within the region."

The value of PASOC as a venue for mutual exchange was clearly recognized by most participants. "I am so pleased to be here," said Maj. Michael Kumun of Papua New Guinea during a break. "This is a great opportunity for myself and others, I'm sure, to learn how the other Special Operations Forces operate. We get to give a country briefing that explains how our Special Operations Forces train and handle dangerous situations."

Standing alongside Maj. Kumun, Col. Hussain Tariq from Bangladesh expressed his eagerness to learn from the other SOF representatives. "I strongly feel that if you have an insight on how the other Special Operations Forces are working, you can take what you already know and create a more powerful unit."

Special Operations Forces play essential roles in meeting the full range of challenges that are faced by nations today. Many countries have called on their Special



Maj. Sombat Koonyotying presents Thailand's briefing at PASOC 2001.

Operations Forces to make the impossible possible and to do some of the toughest and most sensitive tasks — missions that often involve a great deal of danger.

Throughout the week, PASOC attendees explored several important subjects during panel discussions that included: "Combined Special Operations Forces in Urban Operations," "The Impact of Technology on Special Operations Forces," "Combined Operations Lessons Learned – Comparative Case Studies," and "Counterinsurgency Operations in a Rural Environment."

After the initial round of guest speakers and country briefings, the conference broke into smaller groups. Each of these small groups moved between the four separate panel discussions, each panel evaluating an important aspect of the role of Special Operations Forces in an emerging threat environment. Throughout the panel discussions, members explored past and present examples and scenarios, lessons learned and objectives achieved.



Lt. Col. Gurragchaa Batbileg and Maj. J. Mendee of Mongolia participate in a PASOC panel discussion.



Lt. Col. Damien Dilang of Malaysia presents his ideas at a PASOC panel discussion.

Col. Oleg Mart'yanov of Russia listens to a translation by Lt. Col. Christopher Tone, the U.S. Assistant Army Attaché in Moscow.



To further promote personal relationships, delegates dined together, where they could interact on a more personal level. At the final banquet, the keynote speaker was Ambassador David Litt, United States Special Operations Command's Political Advisor. Ambassador Litt noted that the conference provided opportunities to meet and interact with one another. It also allowed atten-

dees to build professional relationships based on trust and confidence.

"Trust and confidence is why we are all here today," Brig. Gen. Donald C. Wurster, Commander SOCPAC and conference host, said as the event drew to a close. "I believe that the success in PASOC and future conferences lies in our ability to come together as Special Operations Forces representing the Asia-Pacific region

to ensure a secure and peaceful sector of the world.

I can say that through my participation in this PASOC, I have established valuable relationships among our neighboring Special Forces Operators who reflect the high standards of training, professionalism and maturity that SOF units are known for."

Lt. Col. Derek Koh, Branch Head, Air Operations Department, Singapore, and Lt. Col. Kavil Mohan, Commanding Officer, Para Commando, India, agreed that the conference provided them a broader insight into their colleagues' forces, sentiments that were echoed by many attendees at the conclusion of PASOC 2001. □



The informal contacts and friendships made at PASOC 2001 were sometimes as valuable as the formal programs. Col. David M. Harris from SOCPAC and Brig. Duncan Lewis of Australia exchange ideas during a conference break.